



Consumer Guide

Low-Power FM (LPFM) Radio

The FCC has a special class of radio licenses called Low Power FM Radio (LPFM) to create opportunities for new voices to be heard on the radio. The LPFM radio service consists of two types of radio stations: 100-watt stations, which reach an area with a radius of approximately three and one-half miles, and 10-watt stations, which generally reach an area with a radius of between one and two miles.

Who is eligible for LPFM licenses?

To qualify for an LPFM license, you must be:

- A government or non-profit educational institution, like a public or private school or state or private university
- A non-profit organization, association or entity with an educational purpose, like a community group, public service or public health organization, disability service provider or faith-based organization
- A government or non-profit entity providing local public safety or transportation service, like a volunteer fire department, local government or state transportation authority

In addition, applicants for LPFM licenses must be based in the community in which they intend to broadcast. An organization is considered community-based if:

- It is physically headquartered or has a campus within 10 miles of the proposed transmitting antenna
- Seventy-five percent of its governing board resides within 10 miles of the proposed transmitting antenna
- It is a non-profit or governmental public safety organization that intends to broadcast within the area of its jurisdiction

Who is not eligible?

LPFM licenses cannot be issued to individual or commercial entities. Also, existing broadcasters, cable television system operators, newspaper publishers, and other media entities are not eligible for LPFM licenses.

How can I apply for an LPFM station?

The FCC has developed a computer software program ("LPFM Channel Finder") to help potential LPFM applicants find an available channel in their area. The FCC will first accept applications for 100-watt stations, followed by applications for 10-watt stations.

The FCC will give at least 30 days notice, via a Public Notice and/or the FCC Web site at www.fcc.gov/lpfm when a filing window is available in your state. There is no cost to file an application for a permit to construct an LPFM station or a license to operate an LPFM station. A construction permit issued by the FCC is required before an applicant is allowed to construct an LPFM station and a license issued by the FCC is required before operation of an LPFM station can begin.

If there are conflicting LPFM applications in the same area, competing applications will be resolved through a process that awards one point to each applicant for:

- the organization's presence in the community for at least two years
- an obligation to broadcast at least 12 hours each day



- an obligation to broadcast at least eight hours of locally-originated programming each day

The applicant with the most points will receive the construction permit.

If there is a tie after the points are tallied, the competing applicants will be encouraged to share a license. Formerly-competing applicants who resubmit their applications together will be permitted to total their points and compare their total with any other applicant for a license.

How much does it cost to set up an LPFM station?

The construction and operating costs of an LPFM radio station can vary widely, depending on the type and quality of studio and broadcasting equipment used, as well as by whether a tower may be required. More information on the availability and costs of radio equipment is available from a variety of sources, such as electronics periodicals.

How does my organization apply?

Applications for new LPFM stations, construction permits, or for major changes to LPFM permits or licenses may only be filed during the dates specified for an application filing window. Such applications may only be filed via the Media Bureau's electronic filing system at www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/media-bureau-filing-systems-and-databases. An application will be returned, without consideration, if it is received at a time outside the filing window.

Filing a complaint

If you are suspicious of or are aware of unauthorized radio operations, you can file a complaint with the FCC. You have multiple options for filing a complaint:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322)
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number above, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

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